

Feeding Gouldian Finches

by Peggy Dalrymple, Galesberg, IL



Gouldian Finches in their myriad colors are a wonder of the avian world.

The gourmet meal I just spent 30 minutes preparing isn't for any of the people in my life, it's for the 200 Gouldian Finches that live and breed in my basement aviaries.

On the menu today is cooked rice and lentils, grated, cooked sweet potato, and shredded broccoli blended with Bisko, a commercial dried egg and biscuit product. Added to this is Petamine, sterilized crushed eggshell, and a vitamin/mineral powder. This concoction is prepared daily and served in the early morning and again in the late afternoon, in small portions to ensure freshness.

Even the most nutritious diet can be improved by slight variation. The rice can be replaced by cooked and drained pasta such as cous cous, pastina, or aizo. A change of vegetables might include sprouts, frozen thawed corn, grated carrot, or chopped greens.

A diet that is not varied, especially

when coupled with stress in the birds' environment, may lead to under eating with the eventual result of illness or even death.



Well fed and cared for, Gouldian Finches can add interest and fantastic color to any aviary.


While a soft food supplement may encourage a healthy amount of food consumption, a good, clean seed mixture is a necessity and must be available at all times. Cuttlebone, seed treats, millet sprays, grit, and bird charcoal complete the diet.

All offerings of food should be easily accessible and immediately recognizable. If the birds are frightened by the food container or stressed by its position in the aviary, they may eat only minimal amounts. Young birds and recently moved birds are at the greatest risk for underconsumption of food.

A "teacher" bird – one familiar with the food and the environment – can often minimize feeding problems in the Gouldian Finch.

Gouldians have an aversion to filth. Fouled seed, dirty water, unclean bedding or cages, can all cause not only bacterial problems but also decreased food consumption.

Perhaps the reputation of "delicate" that continues to plague this bird is in fact a failure on the part of the bird-keeper to recognize the special needs and fears (stress factors) associated with a captive environment. Failure to correct these needs and fears may result, again, in poor food consumption in the Gouldian.

The "gourmet meals" that I prepare for my birds are but a small part of catering to the needs of the true "prima donnas" of the finch world. 

Photos by Peggy Dalrymple